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## International Relief.

It is deplorable that the heartrending Kingston calamity should have been attended by the Swettenham incident. At such a time of disaster the forces of mercy and helpfulness ought to be allowed to play as if there were no boundary lines between nations.

The course taken by the governor of Jamaica in dismissing almost unceremoniously the American marines sent to aid the sufferers from the appalling earthquake, when they had been asked by local officials to assist, is hard to account for. It was wholly out of harmony with the new international spirit of friendly service of which so many conspicuous examples are constantly appearing. Its cause was probably multiplex. The personal characteristics of the man doubtless had something to do with it. Officialism contributed probably still more. Another element was possibly the fear of loss of standing if, as the governor of the island, he should not have the initiation and entire control of the work of relief.

But we incline to think that still more subtle causes were at work. The governor knew well the manner in which our government, eight years ago,

proceeded to appropriate to itself certain islands at the close of the war with Spain. He doubtless shared the opinion, pretty widely held in Europe, that Uncle Sam has his eye avariciously on other West India islands. He may therefore have felt suspicious that this relief expedition of United States warships might have unfortunate secondary consequences. It was of course stupid in him to think so. Probably no more disinterested deed was ever done by our government than the immediate dispatch from Guantanamo of the war vessels idly lying there to carry swift aid to the stricken city. But the governor's state of mind, induced by these antecedent events, and by the inheritance of the old habit of nations of looking upon other nations as crafty enemies always to be dreaded, was not such as to permit him to interpret this mission of mercy as he ought to have interpreted it.

If the offer of aid had come in non-war vessels, it is hardly likely that even a man of Swettenham's character would have conjured up reasons for not accepting it. Warships are not naturally looked upon as angels of mercy. While they exist, there is certainly no better use to which they can be put. But nations at their present stage of enlightenment ought both to get along with fewer warships than they now have, and they ought to organize and maintain a system of international relief by sea which would never stand the least chance of being misinterpreted. Why cannot the powers which have organized the Red Cross, whose neutral work of mercy is always and everywhere welcomed and trusted, organize a small, international fleet of non-warship relief vessels, which at small expense, compared with the enormous cost of warships, could be built and kept distributed at various strategic points about the seas, ready at call to bear relief to any coast cities visited by calamities making extraneous help at once imperative? We humbly but in all sincerity submit the thought for their consideration. It is creditable, highly creditable, to the governments and people of the United States and of Great Britain that they have behaved as they have in regard to the Swettenham occurrence. It is a striking evidence of the remarkable change of attitude of governments and peoples in reference to one another. But would they not still more highly honor themselves by initiating an international relief system which would make such an occurrence hereafter forevermore impossible?